

Proper Pre-Competition Nutrition

Submitted By: Cassandra Frank

Importance of a Good Training Diet

There are no miracle meals that can be consumed prior to, during, or after a competition that will compensate for a poor training diet. Athletes should always eat a well-balanced diet rich in complex carbohydrates to prevent chronic energy depletion and nutritional deficiencies. Along with proper nutrition athletes should always consume lots of water to remain hydrated when training.

Pre-Competition Meals

Pre competition meals are designed to maintain normal sugar levels and prevent hypoglycaemia which can cause light-headedness, blurred vision, fatigue and poor coordination. They also help settle the stomach, end hunger feelings and most importantly provide energy to fuel the muscles.

The goal of the pre-competition meal is to increase stamina and endurance without causing stomach discomfort. Eating too much can cause nausea and stomach cramps while eating too little can cause a lack of energy. It is important to know your body and how much food you can comfortably consume. Athletes who develop a sensitive stomach due to nerves and stress should make a special effort to eat extra food the day before so that they are well fuelled for the competition.

Carbohydrates (breads, bagels, potatoes, pasta, fruit, etc.) are the best pre-competition food because they are digested quickly and readily available for fuel. Protein rich foods (eggs, tuna, steak, chicken, etc.) take longer to digest and may increase the need to urinate. Fats (fried foods, peanut butter, burgers, etc.) stay longer in the stomach and may feel heavy and uncomfortable.

Timing of Pre-Competition Meals

Timing a pre-competition meal is important. For morning events eat your pre-competition meal for dinner the previous night along with a bed-time snack. In the morning eat a light meal 2-3 hours prior to the competition. For afternoon events, eat a hearty breakfast and a light carbohydrate filled lunch 2-3 hours prior to exercise. In general, allow 3-4 hours for large meals to digest, 2-3 hours for smaller meals, 1-2 hours for liquid meals and 0-1 hour for a small snack.

Avoid the Sweet & Sugary “Quick Energy”

After you eat concentrated sugars (pop, candy, donuts, etc.) your body produces insulin to carry sugar from your blood to the muscles. Exercise also helps carry sugars to the muscles; the combined effect can cause your blood sugar to drop abnormally low. As a result you may feel light headed, shaky, tired and uncoordinated.

References:

- Susan Mills-Gray, ["Pre-Competition Meals for Athletes"](#) [1]

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Published on Canadian Baton Twirling Federation (<https://www.cbtf.ca>)

- Susan Mills-Gray, "[Energy Rich Foods for Athletes](#)" [2]
- Health Canada, "[Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#)" [3]
- Thompson Reuters, "[Pre Competition Meals for Athletes](#)" [4]

About the Author

Cassandra Frank is Alberta's Athletes' Representative. She twirled competitively for eight years with Loranne Meek, and has been coaching for five years. Her most memorable twirling moment is winning BN Solodance at her first nationals.

Thanks to Cassandra for supplying the very first article!

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[1] <http://extension.missouri.edu/extensioninfonet/article.asp?id=3601> [2] <http://extension.missouri.edu/extensioninfonet/article.asp?id=3604> [3] <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php> [4] <http://www.drugs.com/cg/pre-competition-meals-for-athletes.html>